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ABSTRACT

Issues raised by the devolution of decision-making to the school level in Western Australia are described in this paper. The first part provides a background of governance structures and school organization. Prior to 1980, Western Australia had the most centralized system of educational administration in Australia. The second part describes the agents of change: the Beazley Committee of Enquiry, corporate management, and the Minister of Education. Outcomes of the educational revolution are described in the third part; those outcomes include an increase in principals' out-of-school responsibilities, devolution of responsibility to the school level, development of unit curriculum, computerization, and a written agreement between teachers and the Education ministry. The fourth part examines administrative stresses: the rapid pace of change; lack of expertise and training; recent moves toward recentralization; and government/teachers' union disputes. The fifth part explores some possible solutions and speculates on the pace and direction of further change. In conclusion, devolution could be successful if administrators and their staffs are allowed time to make it work. (Contains 20 references.) (LMI)

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DEVOLUTION: EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION?

A paper for the 1992 ACEA Annual Conference.

Darwin, July 1992.

Colin Trestrail.

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DEVOLUTION: EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION.

INTRODUCTION

The last ten years, and in particular the period since 1987, has seen great changes in education in Western Australia. There have been significant alterations to the framework of the curriculum and to the administrative structures of both the central Ministry and the schools. In particular, the process of devolution of decision-making to the school level has taken place at a break-neck speed.

The fact that the process of change has been continual throughout the period would have been enough in itself to guarantee an increase of the heat on administrators. When we add the concept that much of the change has been *revolutionary* in the Western Australian context, then it is not surprising that some of the Principals and their Deputies have seen themselves as in the centre of a conflagration. It has been a time of great tension for all school administrators and, in some cases, of increased tensions between members of the administrative team. To comprehend this situation and the choice of the term "revolutionary", with its connotations of visionaries (perhaps), skirmishes, casualties and leadership changes, it is necessary to understand something of the situation of education in Western Australia prior to the period of change. It is also vital to explore the nature of the forces that brought about the change.
The final part of this paper tentatively explores some of the possible solutions that may have helped administrators to overcome the heat and tensions to which they have been subjected. It also examines the possible pace and direction of further change and administrators' response to it.

BACKGROUND

As late as 1980, Western Australia was identified as having the most centralised system of educational administration of all of the states (Smart & Alderson, 1980). Most of the other states had at least some system of regionalisation of their administrative systems which, in some cases, had been in place for several decades (e.g New South Wales and Queensland). There is much debate as to whether this structure amounted to real devolution of any significant responsibility but the fact remains that not even this rudimentary attempt existed in Western Australia until 1976.

There are several reasons for the maintenance of this centralisation with the strongest being that of a commitment to equity of educational provision. W.A. is a very large state with very many small isolated population centres. From the establishment of the Education Department, one of its strongest driving forces was that a child should receive as near as possible an equal education regardless of location. Some years after his retirement, Dr Mossenson, the Director- General who instigated the first experiment with regionalism in 1976, was still strongly defending the bureaucratic, centralised nature of the Education Department (Mossenson, 1983).

The nature of the promotion system in W.A. was another contributing factor in the maintenance of the *status-quo*.
To become Director-General meant to rise all of the way through the ranks of the teaching profession and then through the Public Service positions starting at Superintendent. By the time a man reached the pinnacle, he was totally committed to the system in which he had succeeded and, usually, close to retirement; so why change anything? The policy-making power of the Directors-General was strengthened by an almost complete lack of interest or direction from the political sphere. The portfolio of Minister of Education was considered a relatively junior one and often filled by someone whose real interests lay elsewhere.

In 1976 a system of regional offices was set up in response to a general government commitment to decentralisation. At no time, however was any degree of policy initiative passed to the regions. In setting up the original eleven regions, Mossenson clearly stated that firm control of all policy matters would remain at the centre (Mossenson, 1976). They were simply branch offices of the central Department and dealt mainly with routine administrative matters. Secondary schools were still largely accountable to subject superintendents for curriculum matters and to the Director of Schools for most others. Final decision in all cases rested with the Director-General. There was certainly no concept of responsibility for any significant aspects of educational decision-making to be devolved to schools.

AGENTS OF CHANGE

BEAZLEY

In fulfilment of a pre-election promise in 1983, the first Burke Labor government set up a far-ranging enquiry into education in Western Australia. The chairman, Kim Beazley Snr, was asked to set comprehensive terms of reference with only the organisation of the central administration to be excluded from the investigation. The Committee worked hard and very publicly to produce a large document (Beazley, 1984) with 272 recommendations. For the most part, the report was couched in language that made no strong demands for immediate change. In the critical area of devolution of educational decision-making the recommendation (154) is,

> *That all school communities (staff, parents, students and other) in government schools be offered a description of a range of alternative organizational procedures from which the school will develop means of obtaining a community contribution to school-based decision-making.*

The report goes on to speak of various levels of community involvement ranging from attending school assemblies through to legally incorporated school councils and puts forward the idea of selecting schools to engage in pilot studies of these. The same kind of gradual, evolutionary approach to change can be seen in the Committee's recommendations for the curriculum: pilot testing of units of different length was suggested before the full concept of a Unit Curriculum be put in place. The report was quite well received by all sectors of the education community and work began, at a fairly cautious pace, towards implementation.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

Like most governments in Australia, and indeed the world, in the mid 1980's, the Burke government found itself in an environment of dwindling resources. In a search for greater efficiency, they turned to a model of management taken from the corporate sector and applied it to the public service in general (Burke, 1986) and education in particular. Much analysis of this particular model has been published in the education literature over the past few years and I am not going to add much to the discussion. Suffice to say that this model with its emphasis on system priorities, short

lines of management, and devolution of decision-making within centrally designated parameters, was a critical factor in the explosive change that was to dominate the last years of the decade. A key instrument of the change process was the Functional Review Committee set up by Burke and his ministers to examine the purpose of every agency and position in the public service with a special emphasis on those departments in which expenditure was greatest. This committee, very different to the Beazley enquiry, operated largely in closed session and it was often difficult to obtain information as to just what was being reviewed and to whom and in what form it was reporting. There was no doubt, however, about its purpose: under the banner of "Efficiency", to cut the size and cost of the public sector.

PEARCE

The Minister who initiated the Beazley Committee of Enquiry and remained in the position from 1983 to 1988 was Robert Pearce. Pearce was an active agent of change who spent a great deal of time speaking to groups within the Education Department and the Teachers' Union with the object of obtaining a consensus agreement for the changes recommended by the report. Though he was largely successful in this task, little change actually occurred in either curriculum or the nature of educational administration in the years immediately following its publication. This was because the same conservative forces, referred to earlier in this paper, that had long maintained the centralized nature of educational administration in Western Australia, blocked even a gradual evolution of change. Frustrated by this, Pearce volunteered his Department as a target for the Functional Review Committee. Wilson & Smart (1991) claim that he did this in the hope of overturning the "...established bureaucratic power structure within the organization." A revolutionary aim indeed!

With the findings of the Functional Review Committee in his hands, Pearce published his manifesto, the so-called *Better Schools Report* (Pearce, 1987), and set about implementing its programmes.

THE CHANGES

HEAD OFFICE

Pearce began the revolution with a virtual purge of the middle-management section of the central office. The Education Department disappeared and was replaced by a Ministry of Education; making it quite clear that henceforth education policy was to be initiated in the political rather than bureaucratic sphere. The main casualties of the coup were the Superintendents who had been in charge of specific curriculum areas. These positions, along with several at Director and Assistant Director level were eliminated. At the same time, the regionalisation that had taken place was replaced by a new structure based on thirty Districts each with a Superintendent and some support staff. The main purpose of these District Offices was to be the accountability link between the schools and the (much leaner) central administration and the Minister. In this process of reconstruction, many of the senior officers of the Education Department took advantage of generous "golden handshakes". Many of the specialist subject Superintendents took on the positions of District Superintendent in which their tasks were now to be administration of some matters previously controlled by the Ministry and, most importantly, the monitoring of schools.

INCREASED OUT-OF-SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PRINCIPALS

Because of the decimation of the central office staff, a great many areas of responsibility were left without decision-making structures or without sufficient senior officers to form boards or committees to deal with them. In many cases the most experienced people still around were the Principals and they have increasingly been called to give up in-school time to serve in such decision-making or advisory groups. In one recent month a Principal related that time out of school had been spent at:

* Two meetings (half-day each) of special purpose Ministry Committees.
* A committee to manage the allocation of resources within the District.
* Principals' Association meetings at regional and state level.
* A Student Exclusion panel.
* The District launch of the Ministry's programme of Student Outcome Statements.
* Two information sessions on Post-Compulsory Schooling initiatives.

These, plus other minor interruptions of an hour or less, kept the Principal concerned out of school for almost eight of the twenty days of the month.

DEVOLUTION TO SCHOOLS

The *Better Schools Report* set out a time-line for the devolution to schools of the responsibility for many functions and decisions previously carried out by the central administration. The major transfer of control to the school level was to be carried out through the mechanism of the "school grant": all of the previously specifically designated funding areas such as library books, science stock, cleaning materials, professional development of staff, curriculum development etc were to be lumped together into one grant with spending priorities to be decided at the school level. There was, of course, to be accountability for this responsibility and this was to be achieved through another mechanism: the School Development Plan: a school community, which would eventually be represented by its School Council with teacher, parent and student members, was to be required to define the "Purpose" of the school, to set its Priorities and formulate a School Development Plan by which they could be achieved. This Plan had, of course to be in line with the Purpose and Ethos and the Priorities as set out by the Ministry (1991a). The school community, in reality the Principal, could then be held accountable only for the degree to which it had been successful in achieving its goals as set out in the Plan.

Another area in which significant new responsibility was devolved to schools, and in particular to Principals, was in the area of Staffing:

* Approval of requests for "short leave" was placed at the school level.
* Appraisal of temporary and probationary staff is now carried out entirely at the school level and at least one of the school's administrators needs to be on the team for each teacher to be appraised.
* Selection of staff to fill school-based positions, such as pastoral-care co-ordinators, or temporary vacancies in substantive position (due to long-service leave etc.) must now be by advertisement and competitive application. Previously most of these appointments were made simply by choosing the most senior qualified person.

It was originally part of Pearce's plan that all staff selection and appointment take place at the school level. This idea met great opposition, especially on the grounds of lack of equity in staffing for remote areas, and was dropped. It is difficult to see such devolution occurring unless some very significant incentives are put in place to attract experienced teachers to commit themselves to some of the state's very remote areas.

UNIT CURRICULUM

One of the key recommendations of the Beazley report was a change from year-long courses to shorter units of work. When little progress had taken place towards this by 1987, the Ministry, largely under pressure from Minister Pearce, selected a few "pilot" schools to trial different methods of implementing such a curriculum structure. The unit length was set at forty hours of study and the schools varied their approach by offering them on a Term or Semester basis and with varying degrees of student choice and mixing of age cohorts. When the "Pilot" was a few weeks old, it was announced that all schools were to implement the new system for 1988. As planning for that year had to start by about August at the very latest, schools went into implementation after only sketchy reports from the pilot schools. This, of course, caused something of a counter-revolution in schools quelled only a little by the Ministry's agreement to provide teacher relief time and extra clerical assistance to schools to support the change process.

COMPUTERIZATION

In the midst of the changes in administration and curriculum, the Ministry installed computer networks in the administration sections of secondary schools. The clerical assistants' typewriters were replaced by computer work-stations, the central assistance for school timetabling was replaced with a sophisticated in-school system for scheduling and the financial system was transferred to the computer.

THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

After prolonged industrial disputation over salaries and the changes envisaged by the *Better Schools Report*, the Ministry and the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia reached agreement on the terms under which the Devolution process could take place. For the first time in Western Australian government education, a written agreement, ratified by the Industrial Commission, covering some conditions of employment and governing the pace of change was put in place.

THE HEAT ON ADMINISTRATORS CAUSED BY THE CHANGES

Speaking particularly of the period from 1987 to 1990, a Principal friend said that she had never spent so much after-hours time on the job; not even as a beginning teacher. A survey of Deputy Principals at their Annual Conference in 1989 showed that many of them had spent up to three weeks of their Christmas Vacations trying to meet the timetabling requirements of the new curriculum structure. Many school administrators complained of deteriorating health and loss of contact with family and friends. There was much reference by school staff at all levels to "Bitter Schools". The pace has not slackened and there are still many reports of excessive time being spent on solving scheduling problems and on putting requirements of School Development Plans into place. Analysis of the situation reveals that there were several sources of this heat and tension being felt by administrators.

THE PACE OF CHANGE

All of the administrators to whom I have spoken (and me) believe that it was the revolutionary nature of the changes that caused them most problems. Many could remember the previous significant curriculum change of the early 1970's. On that occasion, the new system was phased in over a three year period and there was a great commitment by the Education Department's Curriculum Branch to the production of new teaching materials and to staff training in new methods of teaching and evaluation required by the change. In the case of the introduction, as described above, of Unit Curriculum, the main props of schools and staff were gone. The specialist Subject Superintendents had been swept away in the re-organization of the centre and most of the Curriculum Branch had been dismantled in successive cost-cutting staff reductions. Schools were given outlines of the new units of study and had to create their own detailed courses and match them with suitable texts and other resources: and all in the space of a few months. In this rushed process, one of the major concepts of the change was overlooked or pushed aside: the change from norm-referenced to criterion-based assessment methods. This was to prove a major headache for many administrators. Because the concept was not built in at the planning stage many subject area teachers did not even know that it existed and continued to allocate grades on the basis of normal distribution tables. When the initial tumult died down, these staff were often very resistant to what they saw as even more imposed change. In a

nearby school, there is still heated argument between the Deputy responsible for curriculum and one Head-of-Department at every assessment time over the method used for grading.

LACK OF EXPERTISE AND TRAINING

School administrators in Western Australia, as in most of Australia, have gained promotion based on their success as teachers. Once in position, they have gradually gained the skills they needed, often relying on those in promotional positions in their own schools and in other schools, to train and support them. They had often formed friendships, or at least good working relationships, with colleagues who had become significant officers in the Education Department and could often call on them for help. This situation is not ideal but was at least tenable in a system of little or slow change. Faced with the rapid introduction of changes and the withdrawal of most sources of external assistance, it is not surprising that many school administrators report that they felt themselves as a group to be in a position of "shared incompetence". This problem was apparent in many areas including staff appraisal, financial management, curriculum development and setting up mechanisms for involvement of staff and the wider school community in decision-making. I have dealt in some more detail with just two of the real problems in this regard:

Computers: In many cases, none of the three administrators had any knowledge or experience in this field. Deputy Principals were given an initial two-day course to enable them to supervise the transfer of student data and course information to the computer data-base. Later in 1987 they were given another two days training on scheduling but this was too late in many cases for them to complete timetables before the end of the school year. Some, even with weeks of work during the Vacation, were not ready for first day. Some further training has followed, but people new to the position receive very little and must get most of their knowledge from those around them. Imagine the trauma in a remote school, like the one to which I received my first appointment as Deputy, where it is common for the Principal and both Deputies to be in their first year!

Another great source of strain at this time was the apprehension of the clerical staff in schools. With very little training, they were expected to change from typewriters, sometimes still manual, to word processing. The

drop in productivity at a time when much new resource material was needed was very damaging to morale.

Professional Development: Almost all of this had been carried on by sections of the central office. Now the responsibility, with a small budget, was in the hands of schools. There is great concern in schools that news of the latest in resources and innovative teaching methods will pass them by. Some have formed committees to monitor offerings from the various training bodies that are springing up in response to the vacuum left at the Ministry. These also determine the allocation of funds to staff-members for this purpose. The outcome is inevitably more work for some individuals and a potential source of staff division.

THE DECENTRALISATION-RECENTRALISATION TENSION

In the transfer of some power and responsibility to schools there has always been the feeling that sooner or later the reins will be drawn back. There have been a number of examples of this since 1987. The first occurred in response to a wide variability in curriculum offerings in government schools during the change to Unit Curriculum. Many schools reduced the amount of time spent by less able students on more academic subjects and transferred it to practical areas. In response to various pressures, the Minister issued a statement in July 1988 setting out minimum times to be spent in the study of English and Mathematics by all students. There have been several moves to make certain elements of the curriculum compulsory and it seems inevitable that Health Education, especially on AIDS, will be imposed on all schools including those who have chosen to make it optional, often after consultation with parents. New methods of selection for post-compusory courses will be mandatory for all schools by 1994. In the area of school-based decision-making, schools must comply with the structure defined by legislation for school councils and these bodies can make decisions in only narrowly defined areas. The priorities set in the School Development Plan must, of course, be selected from the Ministry's list and approved by the District Superintendent.

Restrictions have already been applied, since 1990, on the overall level of fees that schools can charge to parents. In some case this has had a significant effect on the breadth of the curriculum as areas of high cost like cooking and certain sports have been eliminated.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTATION

From the first, the determination of Pearce to impose change on the system brought various counter-revolutionary forces into play. There was a great deal of resistance to the Unit Curriculum both because of the rushed implementation and for educational reasons. At the same time, the Union was involved in confrontation with the government over salaries. This lead to an unprecedented level of strike action, working-to-rule, banning of all activities before or after school hours and refusal to take part in any implementation of school-based decision-making structures. One of the factors that rankled most with teachers was that the Minister, Pearce, was himself an ex-teacher and had been Vice-President of the Teachers' Union. The sense of outrage and betrayal greatly exacerbated the dispute. For school administrators this was a time of great stress. In many cases, the Principal in particular was seen to be closer to the Ministry than the Union. There were even moves to have all those in positions of Deputy level and above excluded from the Union regardless of the fact that they had been loyal members for many years. Bans on extra work meant that the whole task of school organisation for the following year fell on the shoulders of the administrators who knew full well that to follow the bans and have chaos on first day of school would lead to criticism from all sides. The eventual outcome of the wage case was very unsatisfactory for staff at the levels of Head-of-Department and Deputy Principal and this lead to persisting bitterness and withdrawal of support in some schools.

TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

The types of changes and problems outlined above are, of course, not unique to Western Australia. The emergent new administrative structures throughout Australia have given rise to many new books and articles offering assistance in the area of school management (e.g. Chapman & Dunstan, 1990; Harman, Beare & Berkeley,1991; Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989). Administrators with the time to read, take courses or attend conferences have, no doubt, been exposed to many ideas that they may have been able to adopt (or adapt) for their own circumstances. Other individuals and school groups have worked at creating their own solutions, or are trying ideas suggested to them by Ministry-based personnel and/or their colleagues in other schools.

What follows is a discussion of some of the solutions that I am aware of that have been proposed or are being tried in secondary schools in Western Australia. In some cases the remedies have given or are giving rise to further tensions within schools with attendant increased heat on members of school administrations.

GENERATION OF EXTRA ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

In any situation of tension in education, there is a tendency to believe that the solution is to provide more resources. In this case, many schools have attempted to overcome the heat on their administrations by diverting time from other areas in the school in order to reduce the teaching loads of staff members to whom part of the administrative task has then been given. This provision will, no doubt, lighten the work-load of administrators but most of the devices used to create the time are charged with the potential for generating heat from new and different sources. In some of the largest schools, there are simple economy-of-scale factors that can produce savings in staff time. The debate in such cases is whether it is better to use the time gained for direct student-contact situations rather than taking the pressure off administrators who are sometimes seen by staff as having the easier lot anyway. This same dilemma must by produced by other "time generators" such as: altering the ratio between practical classes (max size 22) and others (max size 32); closing or amalgamating classes that are smaller than maximum; or transferring some of the time in the staffing allocation designated for pastoral care, reading resource or behaviour-management systems to administration. Really, all such time belongs to student-contact and re-directing it creates staff discontent and may cause student problems that the correct use of staff could ameliorate.

DELEGATION

When ever someone in a position like that of the Principal finds themselves overloaded with tasks, it is suggested to them that they delegate some of them to others in the school. The problem with this solution has always been to find someone with surplus time. If the delegation is made without regard to this, then the result is invariably increased stress for the person receiving the tasks and heat and frustration directed back at the Principal. There may be, however, possibilities in the idea of forming committees of staff members to deal with some of the tasks. Though McRae (1990) has called the use of committees the most inefficient method of running a

school, actual practice in schools shows this to be otherwise as long as real delegation of responsibility for decision-making takes place. In my own school, for example, a group of staff meet regularly and make all decisions regarding the allocation of the $8000 (approx) budget set aside for Professional Development of staff. The Principal is not a member of the committee and is thus relieved of a significant task. Many staff intending to apply for promotional positions (or Advanced Skill Teacher status), are already looking for areas to become involved in school-wide activities so that they can meet selection criteria. There seems little doubt that such staff could be approached to take on tasks such as that described above and, within a framework of accountability, reduce the heat for a school's administrators. A point of warning should perhaps be sounded here, however: in some schools there has been a strong tendency to ensure that each of the committees is under the control of one of the Deputy Principals or those Heads-of-Department who volunteer their services. The school community must take care that the energies of these people are not consumed by overload or by diversion of their skills from their educational leadership roles to that of professional meeting-goers.

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Even in the midst of a revolution those with strong defences, distance from the action or the ability to remain inconspicuous can survive virtually unaffected. While some of us attempted to come to grips with problems such as those created by 40-hour units of study, increased student subject choice, individualisation of timetables and criterion-referenced evaluation, others simply re-labelled their timetables and continued to engage students in streamed academic courses of limited scope. While such behaviour shielded them from the heat, I suspect that their schools lost the real benefits that some recognition of the new curriculum structures could bring. It is also apparent that some schools (same ones?) are moving towards School-Based Decision-Making Groups and School Development plans as slowly as the scheduled time-frames will allow. It seems possible that administrators could thus deflect a lot of the pressure from themselves by moving the process at a pace that impinges only marginally on work-loads. It also appears possible that such lack of action could cause current potentially eager staff and parent participators to lose their enthusiasm and opt for minimal, easily achieved goals. There is one school, at least, that has at this stage made no attempt to form a School Council as required by

the legislation that gives force to agreements in the latest Memorandum of Agreement. It will be interesting to see how the school community deals with this situation.

"THE EXECUTIVE TEAM"

> *These days the Principal is a team leader and part of the school executive team. The school executive team approach needs to pervade our whole ethos through this decade.*
>
> *(Nadebaum, 1990)*

This statement by the Ministry of Education's Chief Executive Officer is just one of many that abound in the system's publication and conference addresses of the 1990's.
In most cases, secondary school administration in Western Australia is comprised of a Principal and two Deputy Principals (one of each gender by grace of a special exemption granted to the Ministry by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal). Frequently they will have come to their positions from very different teaching, social and ideological backgrounds, bringing with them an immense variety and level of skills.

On the surface, it seems reasonable that, in times of rapid and often turbulent change, these people should pool their expertise and experience to more efficiently complete the tasks confronting them. The reality is reflected in another article from a Ministry publication.

> *Much has been said about the traditional school hierarchical system being replaced with a new, more cohesive executive team. Although very promising at a theoretical level, many schools have had difficulty in coming to terms with an effective and efficient approach to the concept.*
>
> *(Hendrix, 1990)*

A major reason for the failure of this approach to become the pervasive culture is the most obvious one: the inability or unwillingness of individuals to change leadership (or followership?) style. Brady (1992) speaks of

fundamental changes in the role of the Principal to that of " .. negotiator and visionary, communicator, consultant and, above all, leader and manager". Unfortunately some Principals retain their authoritarian control and run "their" school as they have for twenty years. Some Deputy Principals contuinue in very specialised and isolating roles: "I don't have time to do anything except the timetable".

Actions of central Ministry and Union officials have also militated against the formation or maintenance of team-work.
Just a few examples:
* Various types of training are readily available only to Principals. On the subject of school-based selection panels,

> *Any Principal who has not received training should contact the Professional Development and Training Unit to enrol in a course. ... In addition, the Unit is providing training on a cost recovery basis for selection panel members. (Ministry of Education, 1992)*

* The two day District Executive teams' Conference held in one District had a session entitled "Team-building" on both days of the conference. Unfortunately, only the Principal was allowed to attend both days of the conference!
* For some individuals, a most divisive issue has been a significant increase in the gap between the salaries of Principals and other team members. Due to the attributing of all end-of-line accountability to Principals in a work value decision of the Industrial Commission, there currently exists a difference of more than 20%. And, maybe no-one should blame those Principals who insist on a final say in decision-making when Ministry policy states:

> *3. Each Principal is accountable to a District Superintendent for the performance of the school.*
> *4. Each Principal is required to give an account of the performance of the school to the School Decision-Making Group through the School Development Plan. (Ministry of Education, 1991b)*

In spite of all of the above-mentioned problems, the team approach can and does work. I believe, in fact, that it is the only organisational structure that will allow school administrators to deal with ever-changing tasks and expectations. There are, however, necessary pre-requisite behaviours and structures:

* A change in the role of Principals form a single authority figure dependent on bureaucratic power to the team leader with authority dependent on competence.
* The formation of "problem-solving work teams sharing responsibility and control" (Spady, 1986).
* Priority must be given to school affairs over outside competition such as District committees, Ministerial working parties etc.
* Openness of team members to suggestions and constructive debate.
* Regular, timetabled meetings to plan, share information, generate policy ideas for wider discussion and generally build collegial spirit.
* Agreement on the priority to be given to tasks. That is, a willingness to make decisions as to what can really be achieved in a compressed time-frame and what must be set aside for later attention.
* Genuine delegation of the decision-making function between members of the team.
* Flexibility in the assumption of tasks and roles that do not match the designated hierarchy of the positions (expert/novice, teacher/learner, initiator/implementer).

TRAINING

As part of its commitment to devolution of decision-making to schools, the Ministry of Education proposed to spend up to six million dollars on the training of Principals. This proved to be of great value initially as Principals were able to gain some knowledge and skills in areas that were relatively new to them such as detailed budgeting and using computers. Unfortunately, what seemed a vast amount of money was never really enough. Many of the courses were of one or two days duration leaving Principals with some very basic skills and still a vast need to spend much of their own time in gaining expertise. There was also a degree of resentment that reflected back onto Principals because, in too many cases in the eyes of other staff, courses were held in luxurious surroundings with the Ministry paying for accommodation and meals as well as the training. It was also

felt, particularly by Deputy Principals that their training needs should also have been addressed because in many cases,

> *Deputies become the key decision-makers in resource allocation in schools.*
>
> *(Nadebaum, 1992)*

Or as another speaker at the same conference asserted,

> *Other people may build 'planes to fly around in the air, but it is the Deputy's job to make sure that they have wheels and can land.*
>
> *(Maybury, 1992)*

Because of this lack of training support from the centre, it has become necessary for much in-house training to take place. Most Principals are making time to pass on to their Deputies the skills that they are gaining in financial and staff management techniques in particular. Schools have provided funds out of their grants for further training of their clerical staff. A most encouraging practice that seems to be emerging in some schools is that of "next-level" training. That is, those in promotional positions in the system with some special expertise are training their potential successors. For example, the local District Superintendent has run several courses, in his own time, to impart to those applying for promotions the skills of application writing and interview technique.

GETTING OUT

Some of our administrators make no secret of the fact that they are waiting only for better economic circumstances to move to retirement or other occupations. In some cases this may be of benefit to both individual and system, but in most examples this premature "getting out of the kitchen" will result in an enormous reduction in the body of expertise in our system. Far better, for all concerned, to find ways to reduce the stresses on decision-makers through more effective and supportive structures within schools and a better more evolutionary approach to system change.

THE FUTURE

Pearce was replaced as Minister in 1989 by Carmen Lawrence, another politician with some background in education, who brought a conciliatory approach to her position. Teachers were promised a slower rate of change and more consultation at every stage of new proposals. Although this occurred, disputation about salaries continued and the relationship between Minister and Union in particular soured. On her elevation to Premier, Lawrence was replaced for a short period by Geoff Gallop, whose interest was elsewhere, and then by the present encumbent Kay Hallahan. The pace of change has slowed and the Union and the Ministry have reached agreement before the Industrial Commission on the devolution process and the time-line for its implementation. Whether this process of consultation will continue is in some doubt with the Union presently so weakened by internal disputes that it barely functions and cannot be said to genuinely represent the views of the majority of its members.

Devolution of decision-making responsibility to schools will continue. There seems to be a real possibilty that the process could succeed provided that administrators and their staffs are allowed the time to make it work without having to simultaneously deal with rapid change in other areas. Many schools report that beneficial cooperation between staff, parents and students in School-Based Decision-Making Groups has already resulted in genuine school improvement. There is, however, a long way to go. Many schools have made little progress either by design or because the idea of participation is so revolutionary to parents that they are not willing to become involved. In some cases, reactionary staff members are going out of their way to challenge every step of the devolution process and to question every decision to which they are not party. New changes in such areas as National Curriculum, Post-Compusory Education and Student Outcome Statement are already on the horizon. We can only hope that our political and Ministerial masters have learned from the tumult and disputation of the recent past not to launch the system into another period of revolution.

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